

TOWN OF HARPSWELL
COMMUNICATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Meeting of May 27, 2008

Minutes

Committee Members Present: Alan M. Shaver
C.V. Noyes
David I. Chipman

Town Staff Present: Kristi Eiane, Town Administrator
Melissa Swanson, Recording Secretary
James Henderson, Board of Selectman Liaison

Guest: Jay Somers, Sr. Mgr. of Government & Community Relations, Comcast Cable

Purpose: To discuss issues associated with cable re-franchising. The Town's current agreement with Comcast expires in October, 2008.

1. The meeting opened at 3:02 PM at the Harpswell Town Office, 263 Mountain Road, Harpswell, Maine.
2. There was discussion of the impact likely to be felt by Comcast subscribers when conversion to digital service occurs in February, 2009. Mr. Somers assured the Committee that subscribers, particularly those who continue to use analog television sets, will notice no difference and will not be required to obtain "converters" in order to receive Comcast's signal. [Viewers who rely on over-the-air transmission of television signals, on the other hand, may find it necessary to obtain a converter box in order to receive such signals.] There was also discussion of FCC influence over fees.
3. The Town of Harpswell would like to implement interactive television connections between the three area fire stations. The idea was also presented that such service may be implemented for the two area elementary schools along with SAD 75 middle and high schools, and the two area libraries, gratis, from Comcast.
4. In order to get public feedback, the Town plans to canvas the community via newsletter, and also canvas the fire departments and the schools. It was also suggested that the Town have a public hearing in late August or, preferably, September.
5. Mr. Chipman mentioned that Harpswell Television would be going digital and high definition, and also needed strong internet access. Mr. Somers said he

would research whether the television station's bandwidth could handle streaming video.

6. The Town Administrator said that the Town's extension policy (18 homes) may need to be updated. Mr. Somers said that Comcast would probably continue with the existing policy.
7. Upgrading the Town's equipment in the media room was discussed.
8. There was some discussion regarding whether or not it would be beneficial to discuss with other communities their franchise issues, and Mr. Somers did not recommend it due to different expiration dates, and some may not be up for renewal. The Town of Harpswell's franchise agreement should be completed by October 31, 2008 or, if not, a written extension from Comcast would be presented.
9. The meeting adjourned at 3:47 PM.
10. After the meeting, Mr. Somers agreed to tour the Town of Harpswell's media room (adjacent to the main conference room), as well as the Harpswell Television station, with Mr. Chipman.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa Swanson
Recording Secretary